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Pete Seeger

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I'd ring it in the evening all over this land
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I'd ring out warning!
I'd ring out love between my brothers and my sisters all over this land

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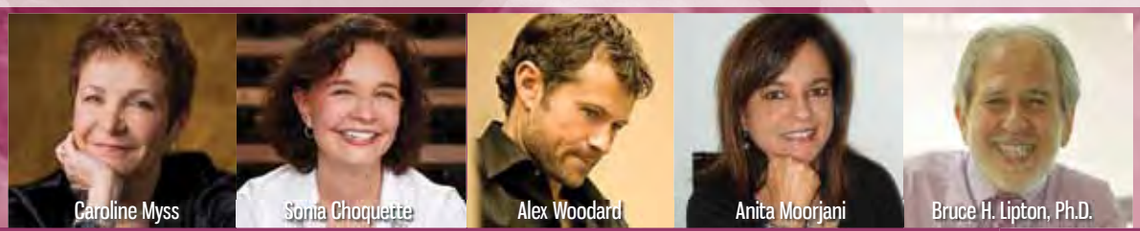

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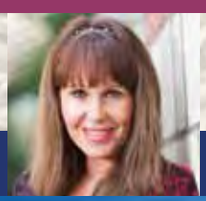

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Feed the world with local natural foods we don't need GMOs

Cover design: Kris Kozak

Pete Seeger 1919 - 2014

Some people never heard of Pete Seeger. He would have liked that. The world's most famous folksinger passionately shunned commercialism, saying, "I'd rather put songs on people's lips than in their ears." Everyone knows his music, mostly by heart. The tributes keep coming after his death – befitting a world leader. Everyone from Neil Young, Bruce Springsteen, Ani DiFranco, k.d. lang, Michael Moore and Elizabeth May, from presidents to just plain neighbours. Some focused on his banjo or his backbone, calling him irrepressible and unstoppable. The far right, still hating him, took a last desperate kick. Bon appétit published the wonderful "How Pete Seeger Inf uenced the Way We Eat Today." His music and messages live on and the best thoughts came from people who knew him.

At *Common Ground*, we're sharing stories about his environmentalism and his time in Vancouver. Google "Pete Seeger" and sing along. It may change your life a little and inspire you to do the same for the world. Pete would love that.

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We can feed the world!

by Joel Salatin

Photo courtesy Rachel Salatin Photography

Joel Salatin is an American farmer, lecturer and author whose books include Folks, This Ain't Normal, You Can Farm *and* Salad Bar Beef. *Salatin raises livestock using holistic management methods of animal husbandry, free of potentially harmful chemicals, on his Polyface Farm in Swoope, Virginia. Salatin is also featured in the documentary* Food, Inc. *www.polyfacefarms.com*

"That all sounds great, warm and fuzzy, but can pastured livestock and compost-grown tomatoes really feed the world?" This is the most common question people ask me and fortunately it has a great answer. Let's look at it from a few angles.

First, America has 35 million acres of lawn and 36 million acres are used for housing and feeding recreational horses. That's 71 million acres. If all those acres were as productive as *John Jeavons' bio-intensive models, that would be enough to feed the entire country without a single farm. Let that sink in for a minute because that one statistic speaks to many issues. [*John Jeavons is known as the father of the modern bio-intensive gardening movement.]

We have far more wasted or underutilized land than people realize. From national parks to national forests to wilderness areas to golf courses, if we were really facing a food production problem, all that could be impressed into service. Fortunately, using does not require abusing.

The assumption is we're supposed to feed the world with less than one percent of the population involved in production. America now has twice as many prisoners in jails than we have farmers. Smaller acreages and more intensively managed plots produce far more per square yard than the most industrial large farming operations you can imagine.

Ultimately, multi-speciated, complex biological relationships, synergies and symbiosis produce far more per square yard than anything else. To do that, however, requires more involvement from more people. You simply can't have the highest production system with the fewest producers. More of us need to decide to get our hands dirty, enjoying the epiphany that comes with the miracle of life and growth. It's pretty jazzy and cool.

Second, a highly productive food system requires integration rather than segregation. In our highly developed culture, we have decided food should be produced many miles away from where it is consumed. Indeed, we even think food scraps should be disposed of in special facilities, not in proximate compost heaps or chicken cottages near our kitchens.

This fixation on sterility rather than on biological diversity yields an amazing foodscape: 50 percent of all human edible food on the planet never gets consumed. From spoilage to size or appearance rejection, the level of wasted food has never been higher in the history of civilization. If we integrated our production, processing, packaging and preserving, we could minimize the waste stream and capture much more of the food we produce.

That's why I'm such a fan of kitchen chickens. Get rid of the canaries and the pet dog. One dog eats more food and creates more manure than 10 chickens. If every house had enough chickens to consume its kitchen wastes, we would not have an egg laying industry at all. Roughly 80 percent of everything going into landfills is decomposable or edible. That's obscene.

Nobody goes hungry in the world due to food production shortfalls. If I could snap my fingers today and double the world's food production, not a single additional hungry person would be fed. No, dear friends, people go hungry due to distribution problems, socio-political barriers, ignorance or negligence. Plenty of food exists.

Third, carbon-centric soil fertility out-produces

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chemical-centric systems every day of the week. The mechanical-industrial food complex would have you believe that, were it not for synthetic fertilizers, half of us would starve. That perception developed several decades ago as the infrastructure to efficiently capitalize on carbon was being developed.

The synthetic fertilizer industry developed in conjunction with two world wars. Nitrogen, potassium and phosphorus are the base ingredients for making bombs and ammunition; the war efforts funded the mining,

> From spoilage to size or appearance rejection, the level of wasted food has never been higher in the history of civilization.

development, chemistry, distribution and logistics of this industry. Scientific aerobic composting was not introduced to the world until Sir Albert Howard's *Agricultural Testament* in 1943, after a career developing the formula in India.

The infrastructure to leverage that compost formula took nearly two decades to develop, including power-take-off (PTO) tractors, front end loaders, PTO manure spreaders, chippers, rural electrification, plastic water pipe and concrete floors. The truth is that if we had had a Manhattan project for compost, we would have fed the world without the result of three-legged frogs, infertile salamanders and a dead zone the size of New Jersey in the Gulf of Mexico.

Fourth, bio-mimicry produces far more food than man-made systems. Perhaps the best example of this is in herbivore production. Several centuries ago, the landmass that is now the US produced far more pounds of animals than it does today, even with modern genetics, fertilizers, chemicals and machinery. Bird flocks would blot out the sun for three days.

Bison herds numbered many millions, along with wolves, antelope and deer. The perennially-based, predator-prey system tapped into disturbance-rest cycles to fully leverage photosynthetic activity. Today's industrial annual-based system without rest cycles is far less productive.

By using high tech electric fencing, water pumps, piping and sophisticated monitoring techniques, we can duplicate this highly productive system while also building soil, increasing landscape hydration and sequestering carbon. On our farm, we call this mob stocking herbivorous solar conversion lignified carbon sequestration fertilization. Continuous or long-grazing systems destroy the landscape, deplete soils, encourage desertification and grind an otherwise gorgeously choreographed system to a halt.

Indeed, some folks ask me how we innovated all these things on our farm. My standard answer is that we aren't that smart; we just think nature has some basic principles. For example, in nature, animals move. In modern industrial farming, our accredited academics and government agents don't believe animals should move. That's such a profound thought that to argue it seems silly, but industrial systems believe animals shouldn't move. They should be locked up in Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs), instead.

If animals move, we need portable control mechanisms, portable shelter and portable water. Hence, innovation is the natural outcome of a simple truth: animals move.

Once we fully grasp the ramifications of these and many more principles, we realize quickly that the planet's default position is one of abundance, not scarcity. If we could only caress our ecological umbilical rather than assaulting it with conquistador pillaging hubris, the earth will sustain and regenerate us for a long time to come. It is all elegantly simple. We humans have made it complicated. Here's to an abundant, integrated, carbon-centric, localized future.

Joel Salatin's events in Victoria

March 22 – Salatin delivers a public keynote "Can We Feed the World?" 7-10PM, Alix Goolden Performance Hall, Victoria. **March 23 – Salatin delivers a one-day workshop entitled** "Local Food to the Rescue!" 9AM-5PM, Pacific Rim College. Tickets and additional information at **www.pacificrimcollege.ca**

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Folk singer Pete Seeger entertaining at the opening of the Washington labor canteen in 1944. First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt pictured centre right.

Pete Seeger

a hammer of justice
a cry for freedom
a song about love

by Bruce Mason

I had the great pleasure of experiencing many Pete Seeger concerts: lung-fully singing along with little crowds of folks or thousands of joyful, hand-clapping fans; sitting in plush QE and Orpheum theatre seats; sheltered under trees in Stanley Park; standing in the pissing rain on Jericho Beach, soaking up communal joy, covered in goose bumps, as hoarse, humbled and hopeful as any time in my life; hanging on every word that sprang from the depths of his lanky frame, every note picked on his long-neck banjo or 12-string guitar.

He was my greatest influence. Seeking him and his music out every chance I got, I also experienced the privilege of cherished interviews and short chats. At the news of his death (at age 94, in January), I wept. Tears of joy for an exemplary life and extraordinary talent. Tears of worry that the world will have to get along without its choirmaster and greatest troubadour. In various ways, he somehow touched millions of people. And his music is eternal.

A few may ask, "Pete who?" or "Seeger?" Well, off the top of your head, you can sing, hum, whistle or maybe play the timeless verses and melodies he gave us. Start with *We Shall Overcome*. It was an obscure spiritual called *We'll Overcome* until he wrote new verses and insisted everyone sing the word "Shall." He taught it to Martin Luther King, Jr. and the emerging civil rights leader couldn't get it out of his head, remarking, "That song really sticks with you, doesn't it?" At this very moment, some folks somewhere are singing the greatest, most popular protest song in history. Seeger shared the writing credits and shunned the royalties for a universal anthem that has helped more people do more good, in more places, than any other piece of music, period.

And there's more. Seeger scared the beejesus out of far-right lunatics and Senator Joe McCarthy's shameful House of Un-American Activities Committee witch-hunt with, *If I Had a Hammer*. Turned verses from Ecclesiastes into *Turn, Turn, Turn (To Everything There is a Season*), a #1 hit for the Byrds. Wrote the definitive anti-nuclear song, *Where Have All the Flowers Gone?* And his interpretations of Cuba's *Guantanamera* and South Africa's *Wimoweh* are arguably the earliest, most widespread examples of World Music.

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The son of distinguished musical academics, he attended Harvard with the likes of JFK, but dropped out to hop freight trains and play alongside Woody Guthrie, assembling the ground-breaking Almanac Singers (in the '40s, when every home had a Bible and an Almanac). Later, he formed the famed foursome, The Weavers. Their recording of Lead Belly's *Goodnight Irene* (the Israeli soldiers' *Tzena, Tzena, Tzena* was the B-side) stayed at #1 for an unheard of 13 weeks in 1950, followed by songs folks still sing*: On Top of Old Smoky*, *Kisses Sweeter Than Wine*, *Follow the Drinking Gourd*, *Sloop John B*, *Rock Island Line* and *The Midnight Special*.

Temporarily stopped in his tracks by the fear-mongering Red Scare, he was blacklisted for contempt as a "Commie." Pete later admitted he was somewhat "relieved" when the big buck gigs dried up. "I don't smoke or drink, don't go to nightclubs and prefer to stay with friends rather than in fancy hotels. When the other Weavers needed money and wanted to record a Lucky Strike cigarette commercial, I said,'We don't need it that bad.'"

Striking out as a solo artist, he played schools, campuses, coffeehouses, rallies and benefits, anywhere people would listen and sing along, unstoppable, passing the hat when necessary, spearheading the folk music revival of the '50s and '60s.

"The most important thing I've done is go from college, to college, to college, usually small ones, sharing great music seldom played on the radio. I've never sung anywhere without giving the audiences a chance to join in – as a kid, a lefty, a man touring the world, as an oldster. I guess it's a religion with me," he said. "Participation. That's what's going to save the human race."

Pete first heard the 5-string banjo at a North Carolina square dance in 1935 and almost single-highhandedly saved and revived the instrument. In the late '40s, on mimeographed paper, he published a first edition of the classic *How to Play the 5-String Banjo*. He utilized tablature – tab for short – a form of musical notation from the Renaissance, indicating instrument fingering rather than musical pitch.

He referred to written music as "fly specks and hen scratches" and although he could read music, he said, "Not enough to hurt my playing." Tab has enabled an endless number of people to play fretted instruments

– banjos, guitars, mandolins, etc. – without learning standard, staff musical notation. It's now ubiquitous in instruction books and on the Internet.

"That little book put my three children through college," he told me, when I asked about ongoing editions of the book. The preface states the material is not copyrighted: "Permission is hereby given to reprint, whenever needed. Folk songs belong to all of us."

I witnessed his defiant optimism often, particularly as he poked holes in a plastic garbage bag for his head

Participation. That's what's going to save the human race.

and arms to keep dry at the Vancouver Folk Fest while he helped clean the grounds. "Music," he said, "helps people through hard times and difficulties. Sometimes it helps them understand. And every once in a while, to actually do something about it.

"My job is to share that," he added, encouraging me to put down my notebook and pick up litter. "The key is finding and sharing optimistic stories and songs because if used right, they may help save the planet."

When I asked him how he stayed optimistic, he told me about a woman who had only two teeth, but told him with a grin, "Thank God they're hitters, Mr Seeger."

From my perspective he walked – make that marched – with the likes of Gandhi, King and Mandela, sowing life-sustaining musical seeds all over this sorry planet, broadcasting their messages far, far beyond what would have been possible without him.

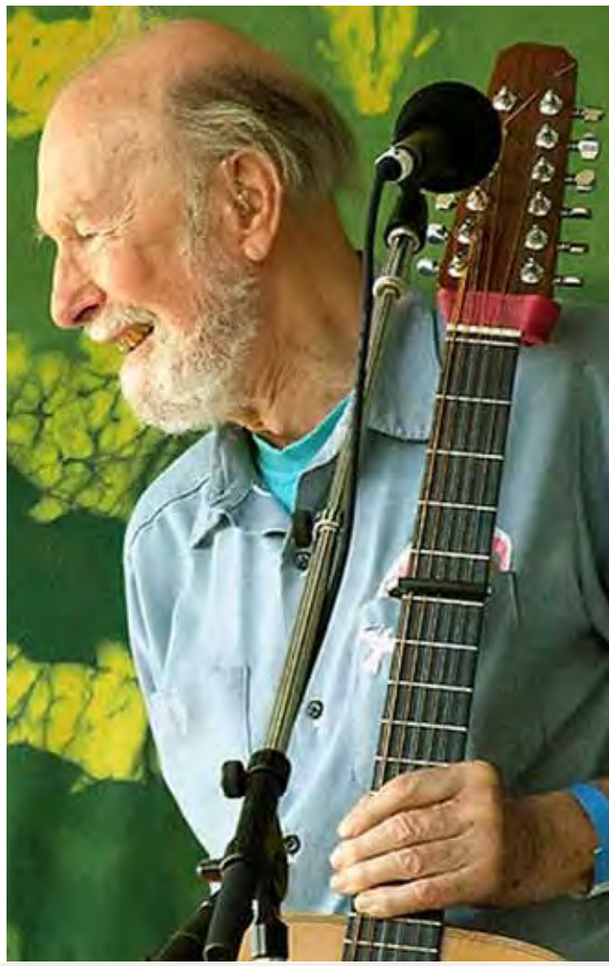
Pete Seeger embraced and championed progressive causes as diverse as labour, civil and women's rights, environmentalism and anti-war and anti-death movements. He fought the AIDS epidemic and at age 91 drove himself miles from his home to walk on two canes in Occupy Wall Street.

He eventually earned the highest US artistic honour at the Kennedy Center, gained entry into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame as an early influence and was selected for a Grammy for "Pete," the Best Traditional Folk Album of 1996. Best of all, he won countless hearts and minds, a role model with an encyclopaedic repertoire and a life-long commitment to human dignity and the well-being of our planet.

Who was Pete Seeger? Ask Google and take it from there. Enjoy documentaries, YouTube performances and more albums and songs than we can count or say thanks for.

"So long" Pete, "it's been good to know you."

Bruce Mason is a Vancouver and Gabriola-Island based five-string banjo player, gardener, freelance writer and author of **Our Clinic**. brucemason@shaw.ca



Seeger at the Clearwater Festival June 2007 photo by Anthony Pepitone

Pete Seeger "live" and "living on" in Vancouver

Although Pete Seeger had previously performed in local living rooms and labour and community halls, in the 80's he made the sort of legendary on and off-stage appearances that endeared him to legions of folks worldwide.

On March 21, 1986, he played a legal aid benefit at the Orpheum for dozens of Haida Elders arrested at a Lyell Island anti-logging blockade. At a pre-concert press conference, he read a telegram from "some fellow called Jack Munro." The IWA president (then BC's largest trade union) advised him he was "taking jobs away from hard-working union folks." Seeger responded, "It's true; I support working people organizing to make a better life, but we must also support the preservation of old growth forests and the rights of indigenous people." The concert raised thousands of dollars and Pete was honoured at a Haida reception.

While here, he was informed that Downtown Eastside residents were being evicted to make room for Expo 86. Scheduled to perform at the World's Fair with Arlo Guthrie, he vowed to cancel the gig unless he could also play for the poor. Gary Cristall, artistic director of the Folklife Pavilion, assured Expo boss Jimmy Pattison that the Fair's show was sold out. The billionaire gave a thumbs-up to a free concert for the evicted in Stanley Park's Malkin Bowl in May 1986.

Seeger dedicated the show to Olaf Solheim, an 87-year-old symbol of anti-Expo sentiment who died shortly after being evicted from the hotel on Hastings Street where he had resided for decades. Vancouver's chief medical health officer said, "The spark went out of him after the eviction. He just stopped living." Ten thousand folks will never forget the event with Seeger, Guthrie, Bim, Bob Bossin, Connie Kaldor, Japanese drummers, Katari Taiko and punk rockers DOA.

Cristall brought Seeger back for the 1989 Vancouver Folk Music Festival (VFMF), fondly remembered as the "Wet Ass Fest." Incessant rain had turned the area in front of the stage into a sea of mud that few wanted to sit in. At a workshop, Pete protested that those standing in front were blocking the view of folks further back. Spotting a puddle onstage, Seeger – in his seventies and unafraid of a "little wet" – sat in it, refusing to continue until everyone followed suit.

At the same time, armed warships were in the harbour to celebrate the Sea Festival. During his main stage set, Seeger stopped singing and pointed into the air to a plane towing a sign, "Greenpeace Alert: Nuclear Arms in Port." Seeger shouted to the crowd, "Look up, there's an urgent message. We must rid the world of nuclear weapons."

With his beloved wife Toshi at his side, he toured the Greenpeace vessel Vega, also in port. Pete had been drafted and served Uncle Sam for three-and-a-half years in the army during WWII. "They would only let me pick up cigarette butts in the camp because I was identified as a lefty," he once told me. "Then the brass heard me play and sing and shipped me to the Pacific theatre to entertain troops. And made me a corporal, to boot."

He had married Toshi – who he called the "brains of the family" – during a furlough.

After the war, on acreage purchased for $1,700 in Beacon, in upstate New York, overlooking his equally beloved Hudson River, they built a log house. Raising three children without electricity or running water, the Seegers made improvements, but never moved. Pete was still chopping wood 10 days before his death.

When his conspiracy charges had been overturned in the '60s and he could travel abroad freely as a citizen, he took the kids out of school and made music around the world while his family made amateur films of Japanese Rice ceremonies, African dancers and Samoan singers, etc. At 91 years of age, Toshi – who made Pete Seeger possible – predeceased her husband by seven months.

One of the myriad ways he lives on is as Pete Seagull, the iconic, globally recognized symbol of the VFMF since its inception. Organizers noted, "As for how Pete plays the banjo with only his wings, well, it just shows that with a love of music and a little determination, anything is possible!"

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Dr. Warren Bell on

The cannabis conundrum

Dr. Warren Bell is a physician in Salmon Arm, BC and one of the co-founders of the Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment. He has never seen a pharmaceutical sales rep in nearly 40 years of practising medicine and has a depth of knowledge of complementary and alternative medicine that is rare in Canadian physicians these days.

Alan Cassels: You are someone who has looked very closely both at the medical aspects of cannabis as well as its political aspects. I am going to quote back to you something you told me. You said, "The current regulatory system presents us with an unsolvable problem?" In relation to cannabis, what do you mean?

Warren Bell: First, cannabis works. It's a plant that produces biologically active components with clear-cut and obvious therapeutic value, ranging from anti-emetic (anti-nausea), anti-cancer and pain-relieving properties through to outstanding food values as well as, of course, its profound utility, known for millennia, as a source of fibre for cloth, cordage and paper.

Dr. Warren Bell

Second, while it contains a range of compounds, it can be selectively bred with considerable ease to produce one or more of these compounds almost exclusively. So the actual plant itself can easily be rendered into a focused therapeutic agent. It can also be taken into the body in various ways – inhaled or ingested or even transdermally (through the skin).

Third, the toxicity of cannabis is radically less than with most other analgesics and, in fact, most other drugs that have psychotropic effects, meaning they affect mind or mood. This is because A) it does not affect the brainstem and is thus incapable of lethal effects even in a massive overdose; and B) while containing the same array of carcinogens as tobacco smoke, the inhaled smoke from cannabis also contains the aforementioned anti-cancer agents, resulting in cancer rates in regular users that tend to be no higher than background levels.

AC: At the same time, you've got regulators who want to get in on the cannabis deal. They too probably see it can be very beneficial, but using it or dealing it is illegal. Where does this leave regulators?

WB: Given the kind of ideologically driven and fundamentalist federal government we are now gifted with in Canada, cannabis presents an inscrutable psychological conundrum.

AC: Huh?

WB: Because of its wide use as a recreational drug and the modest association of high-THC cannabis with drug addiction, Stephen Harper is inclined to reject or even criminalize its use. In addition, governments throughout the western world are so rabidly pro-corporate that something lying outside the grasp of the "corporation," i.e. a plant that can be grown by anyone anywhere and that actually works, enrages them and makes them gnash their teeth in frustration.

AC: What is happening to keep the money from cannabis in the right hands?

WB: New regulations purported to streamline its use for medical purposes in Canada are actually going to sharply increase costs by restricting production solely to business operations; the regulations will actually criminalize individual users growing their own plants. In addition, all recreational use will also still be criminalized. In the US, in the characteristically heterogenous way of our neighbours to the

south, some states have gone whole-hog and legalized it in every way, right next to others that maintain rigid and heavy-handed prosecution and criminalization.

AC: So you think its best to decriminalize it, right?

WB: All the evidence – that is to say all the credible evidence – around making cannabis widely accessible in plant form indicates this will save governments a vast amount of money, time and enforcement energy. And it won't result in an increased level of addiction or even an increase in use. In fact, taking Portugal as an example, the opposite is likely to take place. It makes good economic – as well as social – sense to decriminalize and eventually legalize cannabis.

AC: Let's talk of its medical uses.

WB: It actually makes good medical sense to use it as a direct plant extract because of the ease with which plants can be bred to produce specific therapeutic compounds, either terpinoids or cannabinoids. It is consequently radically inexpensive.

AC: I bet pharma wouldn't like a stinky, little inexpensive-to-grow and highly effective plant muscling in on its territory.

WB: Exactly. The governments of most "developed" countries have sold out so much to a corporate agenda that the idea of a whole sector such as "health" being able to access therapeutic agents that really really work, and are really really safe is a huge blow to this dominant orientation. Big Pharma is entirely constructed on the basis of intellectual property rights law and friends in high places. Cannabis the plant – which can't be patented – circumvents this entire massive industrial/regulatory edifice.

History is replete with conflicts engendered by people with far more power and wealth than brains. Big Pharma, Big Ag, Big Chem, Big Nuclear, Big Retail, Big Food – these are all sectors which, in the 20th and 21st centuries, have acquired all of these attributes. Cannabis, in its small but pervasive way, challenges the foundation on which every one of these sectors rests. As a consequence, there are powerful forces in play doing their best to obstruct relatively unfettered access to cannabis.

AC: I remember walking down a road on the edge of town in Katmandu, Nepal and seeing marijuana growing in the ditches like a weed. Some societies aren't so obsessed with regulating the use of that plant.

WB: And did I mention the plant grows readily in marginal soil? The rather subtle irony in all this is that cannabis is simply a plant. It's not a messianic instrument. Nor is it a panacea. Nor is it the anti-Christ. It's just a plant that happens to have a lot of very useful therapeutic and other qualities; it grows readily indoors and out and like the wily coyote resists extirpation in the human community in unique and creative ways. But it is also a symbol and a metaphor.

AC: A symbol and metaphor of what? Do we have something to be hopeful about?

WB: I predict that cannabis will one day be legalized and sold under controlled conditions throughout the North American continent and probably elsewhere as well. This will happen not because it's the answer to the world's problems, but because it is a symbol of a new way of doing things. It represents inclusiveness, a revulsion against corporate control and an acceptance that we all have to take responsibility for what we do in our own lives as long as it does not adversely affect others. And an honest recognition of the fact that there are many other things in our world that are significantly dumber and more dangerous than the use of cannabis.

When this liberalization of access happens, it will coincide with a growing awareness that health and happiness do not actually come from chemicals, whether prescribed or bought directly, whether therapeutic or recreational. They come from a peaceful mind in a healthy body, generated by far more benign practices, such as meditation, good food, prayer, regular and vigorous physical activity and sincere efforts to live a good life and serve others and to give and receive love.

Now, when that happens it will be awful. I and my health professional colleagues won't have anything to do!

Alan Cassels is a drug policy researcher in Victoria, BC. Dr. Warren Bell is a general practitioner in Salmon Arm, BC and a vocal and vigorous defender of rationality and humanity.

Publisher's note: *www.mmarcoalitionagainstrepeal.com has been formed to protect patients' constitutional rights to reasonable access. The group goes to court to file an injunction March 18th in Vancouver. A rally will be held that day at the courthouse.*

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Diana Rae, Pender Harbour, and her brother, Robert Rae, Gibsons (owner of Canada Hemp Foods), standing in front of the Dragons.
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GMO BITES

Substantial equivalence

by Emily Atkinson

Applying the concept of "substantial equivalence" to GMOs is problematic. Not only does it fail to capture the complexities that genetic modification introduces into a living organism, but it also deflects criticisms of GMOs and promotes the interests of biotech companies.

The idea of equivalence comes from conventional breeding, where two plants of similar species are crossed. But an expert group from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) actually borrowed the term "substantial equivalence" from another policy area entirely – the FDA's classification of new medical devices – when they initially used it in a 1993 report. The term is inappropriate for living organisms with genes from very different species.

In fact, "substantial equivalence" deflects any scrutiny of GMOs. In *Genetically Modified Diplomacy*, author Peter Andrée explains that safety assessments based on "substantial equivalence" compare particular components of a GMO to those of its traditional counterpart, instead of studying the GMO as a living whole. They do not address the unintended consequences of a GMO's "novel" gene or the serious harm that pesticide residue found on GM plants can have. Independent researchers motivated to study these dangers lack the funds while biotech companies spend massive resources to promote their products. As such, GMOs continue to be approved without proof of their safety.

image by Daniel Lobo (Daquella manera) via Flickr

The concept of "substantial equivalence" also discourages tracing the impacts of GMOs over time. Monitoring a GMO after approval would contradict the idea that it is "substantially equivalent" to its traditional counterpart. Would this explain governments' resistance to mandatory labelling in North America? If so, it is an unconstitutional limit of consumers' rights to choose when it comes to their food.

However, the logic of "substantial equivalence" does not limit the intellectual property rights of biotech companies even though patenting implies that a significant difference exists between GM and conventional seeds. A clear example is the infamous Supreme Court of Canada ruling that farmer Percy Schmeiser infringed on the intellectual property rights of Monsanto when he planted seeds contaminated with genes from its GM canola. The slim majority – 5 to 4 – compared the novel gene to "an invention in the domain of mechanical science." Once again, a false analogy to a non-living entity was made, prioritizing the interests of Monsanto.

A focus on "substantial equivalence" also ignores the economic danger of GM crops for certain farmers. The strong resistance to GM products in the EU and the fact that GM crops cannot be sold as organic makes genetic pollution a serious threat. In Canada, a private member's bill brought to the House of Commons in 2009 would have at least supplemented "substantial equivalence" by requiring that export markets be considered before a GM seed was approved for sale. But as it now stands, civil society organizations alone are responsible for pressuring the government to reconsider introducing GM products.

In a democracy, this is unacceptable. Governments must protect and engage citizens in issues that affect them. But the concept of "substantial equivalence" sidesteps so many of the far-reaching impacts of GMOs, to the detriment of the health of citizens and our food supply. It is up to us to convince policymakers that this must change – now – before it is too late.

Emily Atkinson is a recent M.A. graduate in political science involved with several non-profit organizations working towards environmental sustainability.

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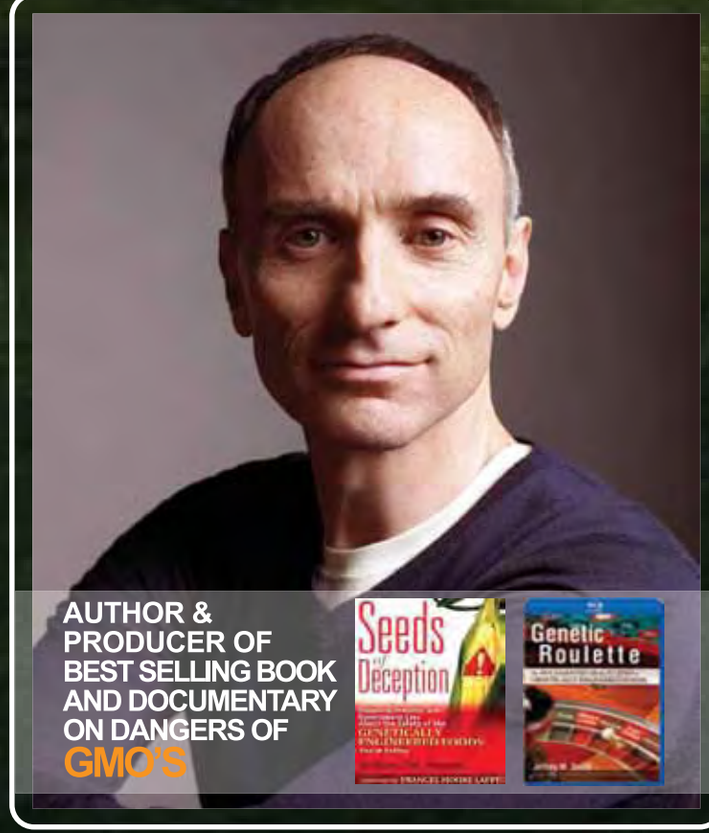

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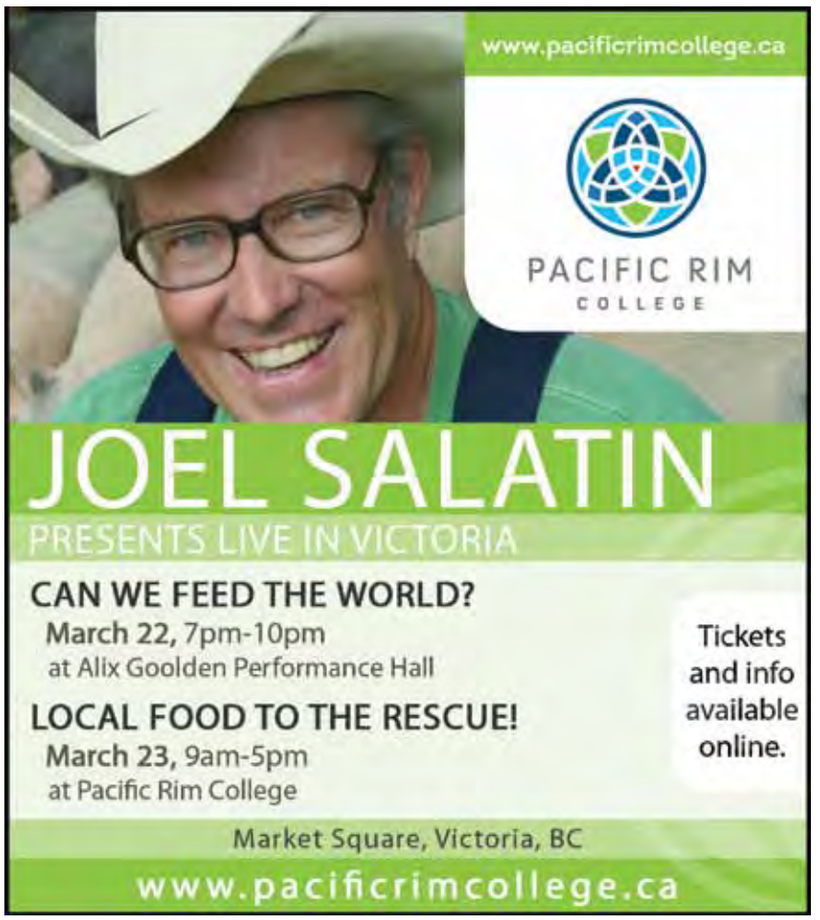

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NEWSBITES

Salmon farms
- A rapidly deteriorating situation

The Harper government of Canada gave the Norwegian salmon feedlot industry the green light to expand in BC. Days later on January 28, 2014, the biggest Norwegian company using British Columbia to grow "salmon" was listed on the New York Stock Exchange. They are talking big expansion, looking for US investors. Each fish farm is now issued a federal licence, giving the companies the power to use fish infected with salmon viruses in their farms. I am in court fighting this. This is a death sentence to the wild salmon of British Columbia.

Each salmon farm also needs a provincial licence – a rental agreement for the seafloor below the floating farm. I need your help to send a clear message to the Premier of British Columbia: do not rent the seafloor to the salmon farming industry. See my blog for details http://alexandramorton.typepad.com Please share the petition "Restore wild salmon, Ban salmon feedlots in BC" (at www.change.org) with your friends and family for the wild salmon. Thank you.

From Alexandra Morton, Change.org

Stop GM fish – Support the legal fund

Read this new article from CBAN about the upcoming court case against the GM salmon http://commonground.ca/2014/02/gm-salmon-go-to-court/

You can donate to the legal fund here: http://www.indiegogo.com/projects/canada-s-genetically-modified-salmon-goes-on-trial

From cban.ca

Consumer information – watch and share the video

A new hilarious and informative five-minute video exposes "Natural" labelling on food. "Only Organic means No Genetically Modified Organisms, No toxic pesticides, No growth hormones or antibiotics." www.youtube.com/watch?v=AftZshnP8fs

From cban.ca

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Ed Asner

I'm already against the next war

An interview by Joseph Roberts

Born in Kansas City, Missouri, on November 15, 1929, Ed Asner became hugely successful as an actor playing lead roles in the immensely popular series The Mary Tyler Moore Show *and* Lou Grant. *He won Emmy Awards for both shows. In the later years of the* Lou Grant *series, Asner became known for speaking out on numerous social and political topics, especially in opposition to the US involvement in Central America and animal rights. The show was cancelled in 1982. Some, including Asner, have speculated that the actor's activism may have influenced the decision to end the series. Subsequently, Asner became a spokesperson for 911truth.org and he is also the star of the short-film hit* Architects & Engineers – Solving the Mystery of WTC 7. Common Ground *publisher Joseph Roberts spoke to Ed Asner about his passion for uncovering the truth about what really transpired on September 11, 2001.*

Joseph Roberts: Ed, you've been in hundreds of movies and TV programs. You acted in a TV movie called *Common Ground*, which happens to be the name of our magazine. You were a character named Ira. The script was about a gay person coming out. Another film was *Pope John XXIII*. I hope you had fun playing this important Pope who actually worked closely with the Kennedys averting WWIII against the wishes of the hawks and the military people who lusted after a nuclear first strike against the USSR during the Cuban Missile Crisis. You also acted in the film *JFK* in 1991.

Ed Asner: Yes, I was Guy Bannister. He was a brutal figure, an ex-FBI man, a drunk, who was down in, I think, New Orleans. He was one of the provocateurs designed to create bad images of Cuba.

JR: *JFK* was such a great movie.

EA: It was brilliant. I think Oliver Stone can never surpass the result.

JR: So what twigged you on to thinking that 911 was more than it appeared to be, more than the official line? Was there something that made you rethink it?

EA: It's an interesting flashpoint you ask about and I can't really say for sure what it was. It's a history of provocation on the part of our military engagements, the immediacy of the information, the flaws in the official reporting at the time of what happened and immediate doubts expressed by observers. And it just grew and grew until I finally... I was still carrying a jones on the first Iraq war.

JR: From Bush Senior's Operation Desert Storm?

EA: Yeah. The proof on Vietnam having been phonied up, long existing accusations on Pearl Harbour, which I deal with in my performance as Roosevelt. I even knew of great doubts as to the provocations that took place with Korea (1950). So much is unknown about Korea: the fact that Russia controlled all of Korea by the end of the war and that they then decided to let the US have S. Korea. Then the fiddling of the 38th parallel and drawing N. Korean forces across the border and then chasing them back creating the conflict as we know it. And every war we've had. Granada, another stupid venture.

So finally it all just built up such bile in me that I was a hard sell from the beginning on 9/11.

JR: The provocations for these wars tend to be emotional and they tend to hook people in. If only people could understand the process by which they get deceived into believing a lie that creates a delusion for which they then blame someone else who they turn into an enemy. The face of the enemy is then created and the war proceeds from that. The propaganda machine seems to be very good at conditioning people, softening them up, slipping these ideas into their brains so they will believe what the government or the people that run it want them to believe.

> The third building was not hurt to any appreciable extent by the planes crashing into the other two buildings.

EA: Hello. We're conditioned from the beginning. You go to the goddamn fairy tales that we're raised with. The big bad wolf. I belong to Defenders of Wildlife, which is concentrated on introducing and protecting wolves in the lower 48. The wolf is the constant Nazi in the eyes of Americans. I suppose even the world. It gets a lot of bad raps, so that if you allow the existence of any wolf to occur, every rancher and sheepherder in the world will rise up and want to kill every wolf they see. It's a constant battle and constant murder. And it's a bad rap, but they're not the villains.

The same applies to any diplomatic situation. We're *continued p.22...*

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The prime of life

I'm convinced to this day that our lifestyle choices make the difference between thriving and dying. – Dr. Ruth Heidrich, vegan since her 1982 breast cancer diagnosis and winner of six Ironman Triathlons.

In our senior years we need fewer calories, but more of certain nutrients like protein, calcium and vitamins D and B6, compared with our needs as younger adults. This simply means we have to get "more bang for our buck." We have few calories to waste on foods high in sugar and fat that deliver little else. And keeping fit is highly important for the body and brain through regular exercise that improves balance, aerobic activity and strength.

Spend a couple of hours a week cutting up raw veggies or romaine lettuce and napa and red cabbage for a huge salad. These keep well for days in containers with good seals. Centre meals on vegetables; legumes; beans, peas and lentils for abundant protein; and fruit for potassium and vitamin B6. Cook up a pot of brown rice or quinoa and a big lentil or bean soup and marinate some tofu for instant heating. Your fridge might look like a deli counter with prepared foods, ready to arrange on a plate, heat and eat. Cook with ginger, rosemary and turmeric as these have anti-inflammatory effects and protect your DNA. Check out the short video clips at www.nutritionfacts.org

Potential advantages of vegan and vegetarian diets for seniors

"Populations of vegetarians living in affluent countries appear to enjoy unusually good health, characterized by low rates of cancer, cardiovascular disease and total mortality. These important observations have fuelled much research and have raised three general questions about vegetarians in relation to non-vegetarians: Are these observations the result of better non-dietary lifestyle factors, such as lower prevalence of smoking and higher levels of physical activity? Are they the result of lower intakes of harmful dietary components, in particular meat? Are they the result of higher intakes of beneficial dietary components that tend to replace meat in the diet? Current evidence suggests the answer to all three questions is 'Yes.'" – Walter C. Willett, Department of Nutrition, Harvard School of Public Health, Boston.

Good reads

Never Too Late to Go Vegan: The Over-50 Guide to Adopting and Thriving on a Plant-Based Diet by Carol Adams, Patti Breitman and Virginia Messina.
Senior Fitness and Lifelong Running by Dr. Ruth Heidrich.
Becoming Vegan: Express Edition by Brenda Davis and Vesanto Melina.
Cooking Vegetarian by Vesanto Melina and Joseph Forest (recipe below).

Tofu Marinade

Use this to marinate tofu or tempeh; thicken it as a sauce for stir-fries, veggies or brown rice.

1/2 cup fresh or canned tomatoes
1/2 cup water
1/2 cup tamari or soy sauce
1/4 cup rice vinegar or apple cider vinegar
2 tbsp. toasted sesame oil
1 tbsp. minced, peeled ginger root (or more)
1 clove garlic
1/2 tsp. turmeric

Put ingredients in a blender and blend for 15 seconds or until smooth. This marinade will keep for 2-3 weeks, refrigerated.

March 13: Vesanto Melina's 72nd birthday! She gives a free talk, "Update on Vegetarian, Vegan and Raw Nutrition," Walnut Grove library, 7PM, Langley.

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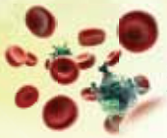

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Just now

an interview with Eckhart Tolle

To read Eckhart Tolle's latest column, please see the current print edition of Common Ground. For copyright reasons, we are authorized to publish this column in our print version only.

JR: In your new book, I feel like you're the modern equivalent of the explorers that came to the new world, but an explorer and documenter of consciousness, discovering a new world.

ET: Yes, discovering is the right word. It's not that you need to make a great effort to attain it or bring it about or acquire it. It's discovering it's already there in you – conscious awareness that's obscured, or partially obscured, in many people. It's a discovery of something already there.

It's like waking up after a dream, because identification with the thinking mind and its stories and the old emotional conditioning is like being immersed in a kind of dream world, which very often turns into a nightmare – acting out old conditioned patterns again and again. The whole structure of the egoic mind is an old dysfunction.

There's some evidence that the ego started about 6,000 years ago, but nobody can say for sure. Before that, humans were in a state of innocence. When we go beyond the dysfunction of the ego, we regain our original innocence, but on a much deeper level. This is why Jesus said unless we become as little children we cannot enter the kingdom of heaven.

So, returning to the original innocence, and at the same time going much deeper into that with full awareness – that's the process. We're coming out of thousands of years of dreadful suffering, almost the whole of recorded history of humanity. If you really look at it in an unbiased way, as if you'd never seen it before, one cannot but admit that, to a large extent, 80 to 90 percent of it is a history of pathological insanity, the suffering that humans have created for themselves and, of course, inflicting it upon others.

JR: And exporting it through colonization to the new world.

ET: Yes, so the important part of the awakening process is the realization of the insanity in human history, collectively, to this day playing itself out in world events. Also, to be aware of the insanity within oneself – old, dysfunctional patterns that come again and again that create suffering. So when you see that you're insane, then you're not completely insane. Sanity comes the moment you realize the fact of insanity. To see insanity is not a negative thing.

JR: At least you're out of denial.

ET: Yes, that's why in the film *A Beautiful Mind*, for example, which is about a mathematical genius who did have a mental dysfunction, his mind was developed in certain areas but he was also insane. The viewer of the film doesn't know that until a certain point when the character realizes that many of his experiences are delusions. At that moment, his healing begins. He's not cured yet, but his healing begins because he's recognized his own insanity. That recognition can only come out of sanity, which is the awareness of unconditioned consciousness.

There's a dimension in us that has nothing to do with content. Self-realization is that I am not that. I'm not my story, not my grievances and hang-ups, not the story of me that I'm telling other people at parties or repeating in my head again and again. That is only form. It's temporary.

When you see what you're not, it's already liberating. Something inside you breathes a sigh of relief. Then, of course, the mind begins to ask, "What are you if you are not that?" It wants an answer. In other words, it wants some new form. It wants a new thought. There must be a thought that I am. But it doesn't work like that. That's why the great book the Tao Te Ching starts with the line that the Tao that can be spoken of is not the true Tao because Tao – in the ancient Chinese way of putting it – is the formless dimension. You could say pure consciousness, but with any term we use we have to be careful it's not mistaken for "It." Otherwise, the mind comes in and says, "Oh, consciousness, yes. I believe that I'm consciousness." It's not another belief. It's finding that spaciousness inside yourself that's there when you let go of identification of form.

Ego's blind spot

Peace is not the absence of conflict but the presence of creative alternatives for responding to conflict – alternatives to passive or aggressive responses, alternatives to violence. – Dorothy Thompson

When there is conflict, there is polarity. Two opposing beliefs or perspectives create this polarity when egos hold on to their position.

We see or experience this all the time. Individuals can be intensely focused on what the other person has done or is doing wrong. Criticism and judgment flow easily. It is so *obvious* that the other person is the problem. Huge amounts of energy go into talking with others about it or playing things out over and over in one's head.

This creates stress, anxiety, anger and resentment within the individual, which can spill over into other areas of life. Ultimately, it can affect one's health, resulting in both minor and major illnesses.

Externally, it creates tension and conflict in relationships. Further, it stalls any forward progress and the negative patterns become more and more entrenched. At this point, even the smallest thing can set off the conflict again.

Nothing good ever comes in trying to prove another wrong.

"Let's find a solution" is an invitation to join forces.

Witness the American political system where the supposedly greatest country in the world cannot get anything done. So entrenched in polarity, the politicians cannot even summon the objectivity to be embarrassed.

We can all see it and acknowledge how ridiculous it is, but we may not so readily see our part in creating similar roadblocks in our own lives. This is because ego has a blind spot. It cannot see its own role in creating polarity as it only sees that it is right and the other is wrong.

This is ultimately a no-win because one ego is never going to submit to the perspective of another. Progress can only come when we are able to transcend the limited view of our own ego and attempt to see the bigger picture. From this perspective, there is my view and your view and we are each entitled to our own opinion, but now we must figure out how we are going to work with that.

The key is in honouring the other person and granting that his or her viewpoint is as valid for them as ours is for us, even if you both disagree. Nothing good ever comes in trying to prove another wrong.

"Let's find a solution" is an invitation to join forces, be on the same team and work together to find a resolution about which both can feel okay. The problem can be solved and at the same time the relationship is strengthened. There is mutual respect and trust, which paves the way for the productive resolution of future issues.

It is pretty simple. If I keep opposing you, I am widening the distance between us. If I sincerely listen to you and indicate I want you to be happy too and am willing to work on sorting things out, I strengthen our relationship and level of closeness.

Our body can be a good indicator of how we are doing. If we feel contracted, angry and stressed, we are coming at the issue the wrong way. If we feel relieved and good about our communication, we are on track. The ego way just keeps us stuck. Transcending ego and working towards cooperative solutions grows wisdom. This is clearly beneficial and sorely needed on both the individual and global level.

Gwen Randall-Young is an author and psychotherapist in private practice. For articles and information about her books, Deep Powerful Change hypnosis CDs and new Creating Healthy Relationships series, visit www.gwen.ca

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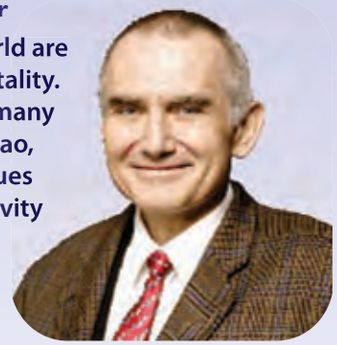

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Shortcuts to growing food

Contrary to general belief, growing food doesn't have to be a lot of work. Cognizant that most of us lead busy lives, this planting month of March I'm going to share some shortcuts for growing the maximum amount of food in the minimum amount of time.

Successful soil building: Mulch the garden with generous layers of compost, leaves, manures and seaweed. Make top quality compost using a diversity of materials that are well decomposed. Bacteria that decompose compost depend on air, water and heat so get oxygen and moisture into the pile, turning it to generate heat.

Tree roots penetrate widely through topsoil and deeply into subsoil taking up valuable nutrients, which are then stored in the leaves. When leaves break down, they return these nutrients to the soil. Stockpile leaves of tall trees such as oak, maple and chestnut in fall in circular wire cages or large piles and mulch with them once a year.

Find a source of animal manure that has not had inputs of growth hormones, antibiotics or genetically modified grains in livestock feed. Animal manures should not be added to food gardens when still fresh; they should be composted or aged first. You can also add nitrogen to the soil using green manure crops of fall rye, pea, fava beans, barley or wheat in winter and ploughing this under in spring. Tip: In summer, grow green manure crops using vetch, clover, buckwheat, alfalfa or *phacelia*.

Seaweed contains micronutrients and trace elements essential for healthy plant growth and can be added as mulch directly to the garden or layered as an ingredient in the compost (or use purchased powdered kelp).

Lasagna gardening: This is about growing soil and food at the same time! Build the bed any size or shape by adding two-inch layers of any of the following (uncontaminated) materials to a height of 12-inches: Manure (cow, sheep, horse, llama, goat or chicken), leaves, spoiled hay, grass clippings, woodash, sawdust (not cedar), seaweed, compost or topsoil as the top layer.

The high fertility of this growing medium as it breaks down means it's possible to plant rows close together which keeps weeds down. It takes one cycle of production for the bed to decompose six inches so before planting the following crops renew the bed with another six inches of layered, organic waste. You can transplant or seed into the top layer the same day you build the bed.

Cool weather crops for now: Lettuces, chicory, leeks, onions, endive, parsley, peas, spinach, Swiss chard, kale, broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower, Brussels sprouts, kohlrabi, rutabaga, celeriac.

The pea gutter trick: Plant peas into recycled rain gutters filled with organic potting medium. Sow pea seeds one-inch deep and one-inch apart into the gutters. When well rooted, peel the strip of pea seedlings out of the gutter and place directly into a soil furrow, made using a hoe. Once the peas are nestled into their furrow simply scrape displaced soil back over the furrow to cover.

Bacteria that decompose compost depend on air, water and heat so get oxygen and moisture into the pile, turning it to generate heat.

Hoe a row in five: The secret to growing other vegetables the 'pea gutter' way is to sow seeds sparingly into individual packs filled with potting medium. When established, tip the block of well rooted seedlings out of the pack, without disturbing the roots, and settle end to end into the furrow as described above.

Carolyn Herriot is author of **The Zero-Mile Diet** and **The Zero-Mile Diet Cookbook** (Harbour Publishing). She currently grows "Seeds of Victoria" at The Garden Path Centre.
www.seedsofvictoria.com

... ***Ed Asner*** *from p.16*

raised with fairy tales. Communism is "terrible." Where did it get such a terrible indictment? Well, this is the land of capitalism. What else would you expect? We'll build the case up no matter what. To a Jew, the Muslim is painted as the holy terror, no matter how many fine Muslims there are and how much difficulty the religion itself creates when rigorously following some of the laws of Sharia. We're fed at the tit of all of these monsters and unfortunately all too often the monsters are paper tigers.

JR: My daughter has a t-shirt that says "I am already against the next war!"

EA: That's lovely.

JR: When I started to really research 911, it brought a whole lot into question. What got to me is how was it possible those three strong steel buildings fell down in their own footprint so quickly, as if nothing was underneath them.

EA: At the rate of gravity.

JR: And that Building 7, the third building, was never touched by a plane, went boom and collapsed again into its perfect controlled demolition footprint. The official report on the collapse of the World Trade Center certainly did not do justice to the whole events of 911. So what does it take to get through to people when they've been given a lie that was accepted unquestioningly?

That leads me to the people who believe in the myth of America and its cleanliness and holiness no matter how many other crimes you can cite in terms of its provoking wars.

EA: We have the problem that I find constantly in trying to talk to people; I don't try to talk to people anymore about the perfidy of 911. People, for the most part, react in one of two ways: They think I'm a wacko looking for ways to substantiate a conspiracy theory and that I spell trouble no matter what. It doesn't matter how many scientific facts I may present to them, which are undeniable – such as falling at the rate of gravity, the fact that the third building was not hurt to any appreciable extent by the planes crashing into the other two buildings. It doesn't matter. They don't want to hear it because it is too radical, too unpatriotic.

That leads me to the people who believe in the myth of America and its cleanliness and holiness no matter how many other crimes you can cite in terms of its provoking wars. They just can't admit that America would do that. The fact that it enslaved millions of black people and removed the rights of Indians. That gets in the way of the myth of America.

There's probably a third factor that says "So what? I can't do anything and if I'm identified, I could get into trouble."

JR: What are your thoughts on Syria and Iran? They're on the USA target list next.

EA: We seem to be patching things up with Iran pretty good. We've resisted the Israeli attempt to poison that well and Kerry is moving ahead, and I heartily approve those efforts.

JR: Recently, Obama actually acted in a way that was good for humanity by not being pushed around by the military lobby, which works through the various different members of the senate and house.

EA: Syria, I don't have an answer. Russia and Iran are keeping the governments supplied and the US is keeping certain of the rebels supplied so I don't know how that will end.

JR: Neither do I.

EA: The *New York Times* seems to be filled with pages of dying and dead children killed by the Syrian government so they're still *continued p.35...*

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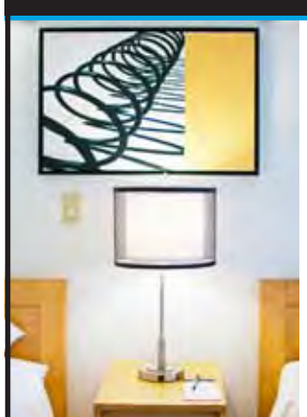

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StarWise

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KARMA DRIVES the wheel of life and is symbolized by a boomerang that inevitably returns home to the sender. A seeker once asked the great spiritual Master, Param Sant Kirpal Singh Ji Maharaj, if there was such a thing as national karma. The answer was yes: "The cumulative reaction of karmic debt of nations results in wars, epidemics, destruction by fire or floods, etc." In his treasure house of a book entitled *Spiritual Elixir* (a compilation of correspondence to his initiates), he tells us, "Natural calamities, like floods, famines, earthquakes and epidemics, like all other ills are the result, more or less of man's ignorance of the laws of nature, his incapacity to foresee things and implement measures necessary to eliminate the threatened disasters. With the progressive advancement in scientific knowledge and technological skill, Man is gradually coming to his own, pressing the forces of nature more and more to the service of his kind, and making the most of the potential energy lying hidden and untapped. This is how the law of karma works silently and unnoticed, but inexorably to the good or ill as the case may be."

We might want to apply that wisdom to the upcoming problems and decisions that will have to be made regarding the pipelines and shipment of oil through our sacred waterways and lands. According to our national horoscope drawn up for July 1, 1867, we are experiencing Pluto moving opposite to our Sun throughout 2014, indicating a time of great unrest, subterfuge, power plays and every other kind of secret manoeuvre that will have a profound effect on our society. Pluto represents breakdown and decay, hidden agendas, wealth and power or the abuse of power, big-time. More scandals will come to light that will rock the government and its people.

We start the astrological new year on March 20; at that time, Jupiter, the great benefactor, sits very close to our Sun indicating good will, harmony and lucky breaks. We are the fortunate ones to be living in this sacred land we call Canada – a land peopled with wise, compassionate, fair-minded souls. If we bump the calendar up 50 or 100 years and read the headlines of the times, we'll find other problems that plague society. Go back 100 years and we'll see that people had problems then as well. One thousand years either way and it will be the same. It is the name of the game on dear old planet Earth.

Mac McLaughlin has been a practising, professional astrologer for more than four decades. His popular **Straight Stars** column ran in Vancouver's largest weekly newspaper for 11 years. Email mac@macsstars.com or call 604-731-1109.

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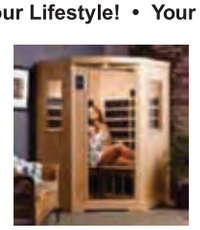
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ARIES Mar 21 - Apr 19

Some like it hot and others not. Well, like it or not, life is going to heat up in the springtime. Be prepared. Don your helmet and shoulder pads and gird your loins. Get ready to do battle. Possibly, the battle is with your internal self, in which a new you emerges from the fray.

TAURUS Apr 20 - May 21

The time has come to take stock of where you're at and where you would truly like to be. You may be restless and, like the bull, banging around in the bullpen. Your heart may be heavy and it is likely that some problems have built up that you haven't been able to shake off.

GEMINI May 22 - Jun 20

You may have to have a little talk with your other half. No, not your partner, but the other twin. There may be some ambiguity or confusion as to how you should go as the month of March begins. It is likely the road with smooth out and you will find your way.

CANCER Jun 21 - Jul 22

Beneficent Lord Jupiter continues to cast his blessings your way although you may not feel too blessed with the amount of challenges and changes taking place. Ride them out and keep throwing out what is not real, worthy, truthful or honourable. By this act alone, truth, justice and fairness will come your way.

LEO Jul 23 - Aug 22

It may be time for some deep soul searching as to what is truly valid, meaningful and real. Possibly, it's time for a spirit quest, in which you set about to find yourself once again. Saying goodbye is never easy, but it is time to put many things to rest and seek out what is best.

VIRGO Aug 23 - Sep 22

Generally, you have it together; that, nobody can deny. Now a time has come in which you may not have it all together. Although it might be a blow to your ego, it may help you to know that you are human and like the rest of us can make mistakes. It's all good.

LIBRA Sep 23 - Oct 22

Read Virgo as the message applies to Libra. With mighty Mars backing through your sign, you may feel slightly bruised, used and abused as you head into springtime. You're plenty tough and resilient though and you will have to use your Libran charm and wit to sidestep the sucker punches that may come your way.

SCORPIO Oct 23 - Nov 21

A deep wisdom is being carved into your soul as Saturn visits your sign. What Saturn does bring to the table, however, will be of continued value throughout your life. Losses and sacrifices are experienced when he's around and there's often not much left when he leaves. Sobering, yes, but priceless as well.

SAGITTARIUS Nov 22 - Dec 21

Oftentimes, Sagittarius is able to see the writing on the wall long before everyone else. Possibly, you can see it now and it is telling you to get a move on and make your moves while you can. Another year from now the story changes and the present opportunities may evaporate into thin air.

CAPRICORN Dec 22 - Jan 19

When the going gets tough, the Cappy's get going. This is a very dynamic time in which much is on the line. A rebirth may take place and your old world may be coming apart at the seams. Let it go and get on with what the universe provides for you, for provide it will.

AQUARIUS Jan 20 - Feb 19

Venus brings her blessings your way throughout the month. We associate her with love, affection, creativity and beauty. She may bring all those gifts your way or she may take them away, helping you to seek on a deeper level in which you inculcate a deep and profound sense of self-worth, worthiness, truth and honour.

PISCES Feb 20 - Mar 20

It's your time to shine as the Sun moves through your sign until March 20. Pay attention to your dreams around this date as Mercury and Neptune meet up in your sign bringing powerful psychic experiences along with an enhanced intuitive ability. Listen to your inner voice as it is speaking rather loudly now.

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Pete Seeger the activist

A man with a banjo can be a powerful force for good. Pete Seeger, who died January 27 at the age of 94, inspired generations of political and environmental activists with songs ranging from *Where Have All the Flowers Gone*? to *Sailing Down My Golden River*.

From the late 1930s until his death, Seeger brought his music to union halls, churches, schools... marches and rallies – always inviting audiences to join in. His calling took him from being hauled before the House Un-American Activities Committee in 1955 to being invited to perform at President Barack Obama's inauguration in 2009.

Like me, he was inspired by Rachel Carson's 1962 book *Silent Spring* to become a strong defender of the environment as well as human rights. In both social justice and environmental causes, he believed in the strength of grassroots efforts. As he told the CBC Radio program *Ideas*, "The powers that be can break up any big thing they want. They can attack it from the outside. They can infiltrate it and corrupt it from the inside or co-opt it. But what are they going to do about 10 million little things?... "

Seeger and his wife Toshi devoted a lot of time to protecting the Hudson River near their home in Beacon, New York. To save the polluted waterway, they raised money to build a sloop, the Clearwater, to take children, teachers and parents sailing. The boat and cleanup efforts have since spawned a science-based environmental education organization and music festival and led to progress in restoring the river and ridding it of toxic PCBs, pesticides and other chemicals.

Seeger was also involved in anti-fracking efforts, adding the line, "This land was made to be frack-free" to his late friend Woody Guthrie's anthem, *This Land Is Your Land* ... Like all of us who devote our lives to trying to make the world better, Seeger made mistakes along the way. But he was willing to admit when he was wrong and to change his views.

As a geneticist, I'm fascinated by the built-in need we have for music; it reaches deep within us. The power of a good song to touch us emotionally and rally us to action is nothing short of extraordinary. And musicians are often the first to donate their time and music to worthy causes. It's why I've had such deep admiration for musicians I've worked with and often been lucky enough to call my friends, from Bruce Cockburn and Gordon Lightfoot to Neil Young and Sarah Harmer and the members of Blue Rodeo. Musicians have inspired millions of people with powerful anthems, from Seeger's rendition of *We Shall Overcome* to John Lennon's *Imagine*. In recognition of the power of song, the David Suzuki Foundation invited musicians from across the country to contribute to a recording called Playlist for the Planet in 2011.

I recently had the pleasure of joining Neil Young and Diana Krall on their Honour the Treaties tour to raise money and awareness for the Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation's legal battle to protect their traditional lands and rights guaranteed under Treaty 8. As "just a musician," Young was criticized for having the nerve to speak out and for his harsh words about rampant tar sands development... a celebrity with conviction and the ability to communicate through the powerful medium of song or other forms of artistic expression can often highlight a struggle in ways few others can.

Like Nelson Mandela, who died in December at age 95, Pete Seeger was a great communicator for whom principles mattered more than anything else. He was a true American and world citizen and we're better off for the contributions he made during his long life.

With contributions from David Suzuki Foundation senior editor **Ian Hanington**.

LETTERS

BC Hydro grasping at straws

BC Hydro's latest "electricity sale" announcement has become the last straw. Hydro has come full circle. It has arrived at the place it began, and apparently doesn't quite recognize it : California.

On January 23, 2014, Hydro officials told the Joint Panel Review for Site C here in Fort St John that it needs to sell its electricity to their brothers in California. It seems that Hydro has no memory, virtual or otherwise, of its recent past experiences with its California brethren. California is presently going through a severe drought, which will possibly remove 2500 MW of power from its grid system this year. BC Hydro sees a window of opportunity.

Recall how BC Hydro (and ENRON Corp) sold huge volumes of electricity to Californians at super inflated prices? BC Hydro is more than willing to jump in to assist Californians again. (Never mind that Site C won't even be operable for another 10 years!)

Hydro's short-term memory must also be replete considering that just four short months ago, Energy Minister Bill Bennett relinquished the BC position in a long-standing court battle with California. This stems from our sale of electricity to California from 1999-2000. BC has now agreed to pay California a penalty of three quarters of a billion "taxpayer" dollars. So we now have completed the circle of life; in the words of the Lion King, the "need" for Site C evolved over time through the eyes of government and Hydro:

1990's Site C – electricity for California!
2006 Site C – Horn River Shale gas play
2007 Site C – bitumen production/Alberta
2009 Site C – self sufficiency/425,000 homes
May 2011 Site C – LNG compression/transmission

It seems that Hydro has no memory, virtual or otherwise, of its recent past experiences with its California brethren. California is presently going through a severe drought, which will possibly remove 2500 MW of power from its grid system this year. BC Hydro sees a window of opportunity.

2011 Site C – self-sufficiency/452,000 homes
Dec/2013 – MLA Pimm states Site C is for "industry"
Dec/2013 – Premier Clark states Site C for LNG
January 23/14 Site C – electricity for California!

Full circle. Of course, back in the early 2000s when the dollar signs were flashing in front of the corporation, it began selling electricity to Californians (our brothers) for as much as $1500/MWh. All good Ponzi schemes must come to an end. The bottom fell out of the electricity market and BC Hydro was accused of collusion. BC Hydro accepted the blame (under Minister Bill Bennett's watch) and the rest is history. We now pay the piper (California) $750,000,000!

So here we are once again, with BC Hydro scheming on how it will make a fast buck on the backs of the ever-forgiving BC ratepayers. Will things be any different this time around? Will history again repeat itself or will April 1, 2014 be the first of many, many electricity rate increases that finally trigger a public reaction? Time will soon tell.

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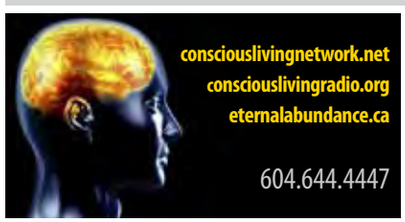

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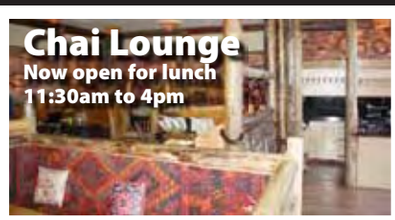

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It's eerie in *Finsterworld*

Films Worth Watching Robert Alstead

CULTURE

The black comedy *Finsterworld* takes its name from "finster," which means "dark" in German. The title is a wordplay on the director's last name.

The annual Vancouver International Women in Film Festival (www.womeninfilm.ca) takes place at Vancity Theatre from March 6-9. The fest opens with BC director Karen Lam's supernatural thriller *Evangeline*, a genre that organisers say is underrepresented by women directors. It also includes the intriguing drama *Finsterworld*, screening on International Women's Day (March 8, 7PM). The film takes its name from its director Frauke Finsterwalder. A thoroughly idiosyncratic and often plain eerie take on German identity, it manages to knit plotlines about an animal suit-wearing policeman, a class trip to a concentration camp and a lonely pedicurist into its unsettling vision.

Notwithstanding bangs to the head, documentary *Last Woman Standing* (Sunday 4PM) is a gripping account of the great rivalry between two top Canadian boxers and best friends Ariane Fortin and Mary Spencer as they fight for a single place to compete at the London Olympics in 2012. Directors Lorraine Price and Juliet Lammers focus on the emotional rollercoaster behind the scenes, including the close-knit group of fans and trainers caught up in the Olympian dream and the pressure on the women's friendship.

VIMFF is also screening *Chi*, Anne Wheeler's emotional portrait of west coast actor Babz Chula who died in 2010. The vérité documentary follows the much-loved Chula as she embarks on a trip to Kerala, India, for treatment by a renowned Ayurvedic healer to help her in her six-year battle with cancer.

Francophone cinema is spotlighted at the Cinematheque this month with *DiverCiné 2014* (March 28-April 2). The eight features include old-school slapstick-style comedy in *The Fairy*; *Three Kids*, a drama set in earthquake-stricken Port-au-Prince; and Oscar-nominated *The Missing Picture*, which uses clay figurines to document Khmer Rouge atrocities in the seventies.

"Never work with animals or children," W.C. Fields once famously quipped. Among those who have had great success ignoring that advice is Japanese director Hirokazu Koreeda, drawing critically acclaimed performances from his young casts in films such as *Nobody Knows* and *I Wish*.

Koreeda's latest, *Like Father, Like Son* (*Soshite chichi ni naru*) is a characteristically heartfelt drama about familial bonds. Regimented Tokyo architect Ryoto discovers that his six-year-old son was switched at birth and is being raised by a working class couple. What follows is a struggle of emotions and ties as the film raises questions about nature versus nurture, fatherhood and the value of intimacy. It won the Audience Award for international films at last year's Vancouver Film Festival and the Jury Prize at Cannes and the two boy actors Keita Ninomiya and Hwang Shogen have been roundly praised. While the film is clearly relevant to patriarchal Japanese society, DreamWorks saw the story sufficiently universal to recently acquire remake rights. (Opens March 7.)

Finally, I expected more from late-night thriller *Cheap Thrills*, which takes as its premise that a mild working class man will do anything for hard cash to support his family. There's no doubt that desperate people will be driven to extremes: the kick-in-the-groin for cash videos in Vancouver that surfaced last month being the latest example. However, after hooking into a good idea, *Cheap Thrills* gets fixated on the gross and violent with little time for moral subtleties as it tracks towards an all-too-familiar, blood-spattered, Tarantino-esque *denouement*.

Robert Alstead is making *Running on Climate,* www.runningonclimate.com

Rats and squirrels and jellyfish, oh my!

Conjuring a critter apocalypse

by Geoff Olson

My partner, who works from home, found it hard to focus on her job once she began to hear scratching sounds from the roof. "Listen," she said, putting a finger to her lips and pulling me into her office. "Sounds like rats to me," I said after a moment's silence. Too big to be mice." I placed a call to a Vancouver pest control company and described the situation. "Could be rats," the employee said. "Could also be squirrels. We won't know until we investigate." I was hoping for squirrels, in part because the quote was less open-ended than for rat removal.

The next few nights were difficult for my partner. Scratching and scampering sounds were now coming from behind the bedroom wall at night. Whatever critters had holed up inside our house, it seemed they were multiplying like Spielberg's Gremlins. "They're building a nest in there!" my sleep-deprived partner exclaimed with dismay. (They turned out to be rats.)

Ecologists refer to rats and squirrels as "synanthropes," meaning animals that thrive in association with human settlements. My partner is as creeped-out by their squatting as I am, but as a committed animal lover she is the first to tell anyone these highly intelligent creatures are capable of "laughter" (high-pitched vocalization during play, scientists claim).

How smart are they? Bill Bryson's entertaining and informative book, *At Home: A Short History of Private Life*, describes how rats will work cooperatively for a common goal. "At the former Gansevoort poultry market in Greenwich Village, New York, pest control authorities could not understand how rats were stealing eggs without breaking them so one night an exterminator sat in hiding to watch. What he saw was that one rat would embrace an egg with all four legs, then roll over on his back. A second rat would then drag the first rat by its tail to their burrow, where they would share their prize in peace," Bryson notes.

If these critters ever evolve opposable thumbs, we're screwed.

Rodents with designs on human dwellings come in three main varieties in temperate zones: *Rattus rattus* or the common roof rat, *Rattus norwegicus* or the Norway rat, and *Mus musculis*, the dusty-coloured house mouse. The first kind makes its home in attics and rooftops – like mine. The second is the scary one associated with sewers, urban back alleys and film noir. The third is the tiny scourge of kitchen floors and Disney flicks. All varieties are astoundingly prolific. Only the high death rate of rats – up to 95 percent for Norway rats – keeps the critters from tumbling from our cupboards and vents like coins from a slot machine.

If rodents were said to have any kind of superpower, it would have to be chewing. My partner and I put a compost bin in our backyard. Within a year's time, rats – presumably the Norway variety – made their way through the bailing wire around the heavy-duty plastic, forming tunnels throughout the compost. But since it was outdoors, we weren't all that concerned. Our cat, a mouser extraordinaire, was all the patrol we needed on the domestic front. Or so we thought.

Of course, there are multiple reasons why you don't want rats in or around your home. "Rats consume and contaminate food with their fur, urine and feces. Rat burrowing causes streets and structures to collapse. Their constant gnawing damages property. This has caused power outages, Internet blackouts, computer crashes, fires and human deaths. It is estimated that 25 percent of all fires attributed to "unknown causes" are probably started by rodents gnawing on gas lines, electrical wiring and matches," according to a document on municipal rodent management from the Illinois Department of Public Health.

The common squirrel is no slouch at destructive behaviour, either. *Wild Ones* author Jon Mooallem was intrigued by a story about a squirrel that immolated itself on a power line in Tampa Florida, cutting off power to 700 customers. So he set up a Google alert in 2013 using the term squirrel power. In less than three month's time, he had catalogued reports of 50 power outages caused by squirrels in 24 states. "And these, of course, are only those power outages severe enough to make the news," he wrote in *the New York Times*.

"Squirrels cut power to a regional airport in Virginia, a Veterans Affairs medical centre in Tennessee, a university in Montana and a Trader Joe's in South Carolina. Five days after the Trader Joe's went down, another squirrel cut power to 7,200 customers in Rock Hill, S.C., on the opposite end of the state... Nine days later, 3,800 more South Carolinians lost power after a squirrel blew up a circuit breaker in the town of Summerville."

Mooallem's list of rodent-related mayhem goes on and on: 9,200 power-deprived customers in Portland on July 1; 3,140 customers on July 23; and 7,400 customers on July 26 – 10,000 customers in Kentucky in two separate events a few days apart. The town of Lynchburg, Va., suffered large-scale power outages caused by squirrels on two consecutive Thursdays in June. "Downtown went dark. At Lynchburg's Academy of Fine Arts, patrons were left to wave their lighted iPhone screens at the art on the walls, like torch-carrying Victorian explorers groping through a tomb," observes the writer.

I discovered more of the same north of the border through a quick search of "squirrel power" on Google Canada. In June, thousands of Maryland, New Brunswick, residents were left in the dark, according to CBC News, after "a squirrel climbed in a substation, causing a breaker to catch fire, sending a trail of black smoke into the air," in the words of a Brunswick Power spokesperson. In October, a bushy-tailed terrorist triggered a massive power outage throughout Fredericton's downtown core. Also in October, a stretch of Highway 12 in Ramara Township in Ontario was closed for a few hours after a squirrel on a wire caused a utility pole to catch fire, resulting in Hydro wires falling onto the highway.

Canada's national rodent-symbol has also made headlines in this context. On January 11 of this year, a 152-car train laden with coal was derailed in Burnaby after heavy rains washed out a beaver dam. "Almost the entire content of one car has been emptied into the creek and the contents of a second car are spread down the creek bank," noted a spokesperson for Voters Taking Action on Climate Change at the time. It would be misleading to blame *Castor canadensis* for the derailment, but the incident demonstrates how bad weather and beastly habits can turbocharge the Law of Unintended Consequences.

photo © Rico Leffanta

Squirrels and other rodents cost US states hundreds of millions of dollars a years in repairs, all in a time of crumbling infrastructure awaiting trillions of dollars in uncommitted funds. The limit to their destructive ability has yet to be seen. A squirrel shut down the NASDAQ for 82 minutes in a 1987 incident. Another squirrel shut down the NASDAQ in 1994.

How do the creatures manage these assaults on the electrical grid? Two ways: the first is through obsessively chewing through wires. The second and more common method is for a scampering squirrel to touch on two pieces of energized equipment simultaneously, completing the circuit and exploding in a flash of squirrel-combustion (sometimes with an obliging pop). If the squirrel's charred remains do not drop to the ground and remains stuck on the wires or equipment, it can generate a so-called "continuous fault," which interferes with an electrical restart.

Utility companies have fashioned various guards to minimize these ongoing assaults on the grid, but rodents have millions of years of evolution behind them, as opposed to our few hundred years of industrial tinkering. One squirrel lights up on a wire like a Roman candle and a dozen more are ready to take its place, like a formation of nut-gathering insurgents.

Feral cats, raccoons and birds also contribute to the attack on electrical utilities, according to Mooallem in the *Times* and the disruptions can be quite counter-intuitive. "Last month, reports surfaced in Oklahoma of Great Horned Owls dropping snakes onto utility poles, thereby causing frequent power outages."

Back to the rats. In March 2013, after a mystery power outage at a Fukushima Daiichi power plant, engineers discovered the charred remains of a six-inch-long rat by a switchboard linked to the cooling system. The power outage deprived a pool of fuel rods of energy for cooling – a dangerous development, to say the least. The engineers believe the rodent gnawed on the switchboard cables, precipitating the blackout.

The nuclear complex, severely damaged by the March 2011 tsunami, requires a constant power supply so the repair work can continue uninterrupted and fuel rods do not overheat. The whole area is an atomic tinderbox, with many experts predicting terrible consequences from any unforeseen developments.

Just two weeks after its fried rat incident, Tokyo Electric Power Company shut down another one of the cooling systems to remove two more dead rodents. In November 2013, a warning alarm went off after a rat urinated on the alarm wiring. Then on December 10, rats yet again set off a power system alarm after entering a power panel box at the plant.

> Ecologists refer to rats and squirrels as "synanthropes," meaning animals that thrive in association with human settlements.

That's four power-compromising incidents involving rats at a nuclear complex in under a year. We're not talking about unrelated accidents, but a consistent pattern. Is this the way the world ends, not with a bang but by a whisker?

In his 1988 book, *The Collapse of Complex Societies*, anthropologist Joseph Tainter argued that societies disintegrate when their investments in social complexification reach a point of diminishing marginal returns. That is, they get less and less out of doing more and more, while small perturbations scale up into large, nonlinear gyrations. The only way back to a state of social stability is to shed complexity – that is, to collapse, either slowly like a failed soufflé or suddenly like a house of cards.

Whatever dire threat you can imagine for humanity – solar flares, asteroids, nuclear war, global warming, a return ice age, a reunion tour by Styx – rodents seem like outliers in the apocalyptic laundry list. Yet they represent small nudges to complex systems sensitive to disturbances. Even marine life is getting into the act. In 1999, 40 million Filipinos experienced a massive power outage. Many thought a coup was underway, and in a sense one was – from a jellyfish bloom in the South Pacific that had clogged the cooling system of one of the Philippines' biggest coal-fired plants.

On July 27, 2006, while docked in the port of Brisbane, Australia, the USS Ronald Reagan suf- *continued p.34...*

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... ***Critter apocalypse*** *from p.33*

fered an "acute case of fouling" from jellyfish in the words of the commander of the US Naval Air Forces. Thousands of the gelatinous creatures, sucked into the cooling system of the ship's nuclear power plant, brought the ship's onboard capabilities to a standstill. Then the most modern aircraft carrier in service, the USS Ronald Reagan was forced out of port by a species hundreds of millions of years old.

Yet the creatures are capable of even bigger defeats. In September 2013, one of the world's largest nuclear reactors was forced to shut down after tons of jellyfish clogged the pipes that bring in cool water to the plant's turbines. Operators of the Oskarshamn nuclear plant in southeastern Sweden had to cut power to one of the reactors to perform repairs. It was not the first, nor will it be the last, shutdown at an atomic complex due to jellyfish, experts believe.

The enormous blooms of jellyfish in the world's oceans and lakes are thought to have resulted from carbon-compound acidification, coupled with the decades-long decimation of large fish species and other marine life by the global fishing industry. This has given the sci-fi organism an edge over declining species, allowing them to occupy a niche friendly to their Precambrian habits. In *Stung!: On Jellyfish Blooms and the Future of the Ocean*, biologist Lisa-ann Gershwin insists we have taken the ocean past the point of no return and an invertebrate species more ancient than the dinosaurs is rushing in to fill a vacuum largely of our own making. It is all unutterably sad.

In a 1969 essay, naturalist Loren Eiseley reminisces about a discovery he makes after a nearby lot is dug up for a supermarket development. In his apartment, he finds "a little heap of earth on the carpet and a scrabble of pebbles that had been kicked merrily over the edge of one of the flowerpots."

It is probably one of the furry inhabitants of the lot, sent scurrying by the bulldozers and backhoes, he concludes. Somehow, in his flight, a mouse "had found his way to this room with drawn shades where no one would come till nightfall. And here he had smelled green leaves and run quickly up the flower pot to dabble his paws in common earth." But the naturalist never sees the mouse in his burrow, even though he looks hopefully for several days into the fern pot. Perhaps it was a victim of a trap in another tenant's room, he figures.

"About my ferns there had begun to linger the insubstantial vapour of an autumn field, the distilled essence, as it were, of a mouse brain in exile from his home. It was a small dream, like our dreams, carried a long and weary journey along pipes and through spider webs, past holes over which loomed the shadows of waiting cats, and finally, desperately, into this room where he had played in the shuttered daylight for an hour among the green ferns on the floor. Every day these invisible dreams pass us on the street, or rise from beneath our feet, or look out upon us from beneath a bush."

Our human dreams – of gleaming spires, belching smokestacks and atomic reactors – have not, for the most part, factored in the Earth's other inhabitants other than as pests, pets, food or fodder for laboratory experiments. The present unravelling of the environment may turn out to be a final, fatal reminder that we are not the 'crown of creation.' Like any of our animal brethren, we are just another spectral form in nature's Great Dreaming.

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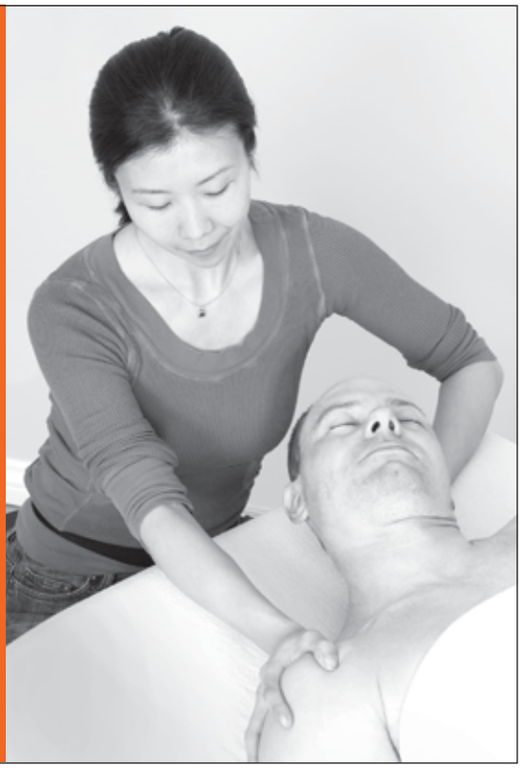

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... **Ed Asner** *from p.22*

on the march of indicting Syria. That to me was the greatest triumph of the people in the US to finally wake up and embody that t-shirt you were talking about ("I am already against the next war!"). Due to public opinion, Obama and the government currently decided not to go to war over Syria. Where it will end, I don't know.

JR: You are involved in the autism awareness movement.

EA: Yes, I don't do it much but my son is the CEO of Autism Speaks in California. His two-year-old son is heavily autistic and his brother, my youngest son, is autistic and will be getting his degree in the spring. He's a high-functioning autistic. So we're involved as a family.

JR: In the long arc of history, what do you think 911 represents?

EA: I don't see it as a long arc, other than the exposure of the truth. By the time the American people believe it was a put-up job, all the miscreants will be dead. Even if it gets written about then, which is highly doubtful because as I say Americans don't want to read about the destruction of their myth, at the time it was used to hype George Bush's administration, which was failing by that point, to create an easing into war. First against Afghanistan, then Iraq and other countries.

JR: I have studied Thomas Paine's *Common Sense 1776* and what happened then, when people in the American colonies rose up against the British Empire and their royalty. Now we've got this new royalty, the people that run the banks and control the economy and we need a different kind of revolution where we open our minds and hearts, connect with each other, find common ground and get our common sense back to make this a more peaceful and kind planet.

EA: Well, I certainly applaud your wishes. I fear a revolution is in order but I would be concerned that, given the make-up of America and what it tends to foster and believe in, it would first produce a fascist government. The fear of fascism in this country is quite high. No matter what the constitution says.

JR: Corporatism is another way to say fascism.

EA: I would liken it to Spain after Franco, after 50 to 60 years of dictatorship Spain then gets a socialist government, which is long overdue and passes needed reforms. But they're in trouble now and what will Spain end up becoming? What is normal? I really don't know. Is Britain normal? You're a Canadian – you tell me about life in Britain.

illustration by Geoff Olson

JR: I think life in Britain has shrunk. My dad was from Wales. I went over there and noticed, from my perspective, that people have been sucked dry. The empire is thirsty and truthless. The psychopaths that want to run the world just don't know when enough is enough. Sometimes, wealth becomes crystallized suffering on the backs of common people. I'd like to see a society that's into sharing and doing things for the social good.

EA: A true communist society?

JR: I think a cooperative society. Cooperatives might be a third way out of the mess we're in. Using credit unions instead of banks, supporting organization and businesses where decisions are made by the members… communal cooperative democracy. I hate to use the words of the enemy like 'consumer,' 'moving forward' or 'homelessness'. For one, we're human beings. Mother Earth is the home of every person born on this planet. They might not have a roof, i.e. 'roof-less,' but they're a human being so Earth is their home. We need to use language that liberates rather than condemns us into believing their bullshit.

EA: Language is really important. I was baiting you when I said 'communist.'

JR: Well, I've been around the block, started this magazine 32 years ago and have had the good fortune to learn as much I can from people like you and others. I'm looking forward to the upcoming reThink 911 tour in Canada this month. The keynote speaker is Richard Gage, president of Architect & Engineers for 911 Truth, an organization with over 2,000 professionals who demand a real commission of inquiry into 911. An inquiry that is open to all evidence, not just selective evidence and run in a transparent manner. The reThink 911 tour starts in BC and goes right across the country. It seems to be easier to get people to imagine rethinking 911 in Canada than in the States right now. But there's going to be cross-pollination and there will be large audiences listening to this. 911 is the foundation of so much of what's happening now and if the foundation is a rotten lie then the house isn't going to stand.

EA: That's for sure.

JR: 911 was an inside job and I'm hoping more and more people will come to understand the official report on 911 is incorrect and demand getting down to what is true. If Thomas Paine were alive today, he would want the truth on 911 to come out.

EA: What percentage of Canadians think that?

JR: I'd say it's growing. I think it started small, but now it's over 50%. We're getting closer to a tipping point where people will demand a real inquiry. It is not about blaming or accusing any one for doing it, but rather the official report is bogus, and to honour those affected by 911 we all deserve a real investigation with subpoena powers. Neither by Henry Kissinger, nor his replacements who ran the official commission. Those with oil interests in Afghanistan or Iraq ought not to be chairing a real commission dedicated to uncovering the truth of how the building actually came down.

EA: I think we've gotten to the heart of the subject. Sometimes, you can talk or write too much. When we quote, we quote the simplest phrases, don't we? Like your daughter's t-shirt, "I am already against the next war," God love her.

JR: Thank you so much, Ed.

EA: A pleasure talking to you.

The reThink911.ca "The Evidence Might Surprise You" cross-Canada tour starts on March 13 in Prince George, BC, and finishes in Halifax, NS, on March 31. For more info, visit the following websites: AE911truth.org and reThink911.ca

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MAR 9
J.Krishnamurti: What is the source of disorder in our lives? Free DVD showing, refreshments, dialogue. Church of Truth, Victoria, 2-5PM. Whenever JK lectured on subjects such as freedom, truth and meditation his clarity allowed people to see themselves and the world in a new way. We address these and other topics together through dialogue: purposeful awareness of the mind when listening, which allows us to discover each subject anew and to share our spontaneous insight as it arises. www.meetup.com/The-British-Columbia-Krishnamurti-Group/ krishnamurtigroup@live.com www.krishnamurti-canada.ca, 604-354-1534.

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MAR 13
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MAR 13-31
Rethink 911 Canada Tour: 17-city tour by Architects and Engineers for 9/11 Truth. Founder Richard Gage presents the evidence why 2,100 technical and building professionals want new investigation into the destruction of the three World Trade Center skyscrapers on 9/11. Visit ReThink911.ca

MAR 14-16
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MAR 14-16
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MAR 15
Living in the Spiritual Zone – How to Stay Present. FREE Talk 7PM. Meditation/Ecology Centre, 11011 Shell Rd., Richmond. Linda, 604-985-5840, lindabbee@gmail.com. Drop-ins welcome.

MAR 15-16
Dao Longevity and Immortality Workshops I & II, Saturday-Sunday, 10AM-5PM, $55 each day at Master Sha's LPH Centre, 1280 Odlum Drive, Vancouver. www.lovepeaceharmonybc.com

MAR 17
Climate Change Confronts Us: Evening presentation at Centre of Peace, 1825 W. 16th Ave., 7-9PM. Free, donations welcome. Phone 604-731-3101. www.canadianmemorial.org

MAR 21-23
Self-Knowledge and the Awakening of Intelligence: Explore Krishnamurti's approach to self-knowledge as key to the transformation of consciousness. With Ravi Ravindra, PhD, at Swanwick Centre in Victoria. Info & registration: www.swanwickcentre.ca/node/949

MAR 22 & 23
Joel Salatin, author of *You Can Farm, Salad Bar Beef* and featured in the documentary *Food, Inc.*, gives a public talk Mar 22 "Can We Feed the World?" 7-10PM, Alix Goolden Performance Hall, Victoria. March 23: One-day workshop "Local Food to the Rescue," 9AM-5PM, Pacific Rim College. Tickets & info: www.pacificrimcollege.ca

MAR 22 & 29
Grof Holotropic Breathwork Daylong Intensives: Directly access source energy for mind/body/spirit transformation $125 earlybird, UBC. MAR 29, Vancouver Island MAR 22. Pre-register at www.thesecretofbreath.com

MAR 23
J.Krishnamurti: What is the source of disorder in our lives? Free DVD showing, refreshments, dialogue. Vancouver Public Library 7th Floor, Board Breakout Room, 1-4PM. "It is a most extraordinary thing that although most of us are opposed to political tyranny, we inwardly accept the authority of another to twist our minds and our way of life. If we completely reject all so-called spiritual authority, all ceremonies, rituals and dogmas, it means that we can come near to that infinite, immeasurable, reality." www.meetup.com/ The-British-Columbia-Krishnamurti-Group/ krishnamurtigroup@live.com www.krishnamurti-canada.ca, 604-354-1534.

MAR 23
Positive Mysticism – Free Jyoti Meditation Workshop. 2PM. Meditation & Ecology Centre, 11011 Shell Rd., Richmond. Please pre-register: Linda, 604-985-5840, lindabbee@gmail.com Drop-ins welcome.

MAR 27-30
Restorative Yoga Cleanse: Includes Accommodation, Meals and Juicing, Yoga, Colonics, Cleansing Herbs. archerinthemountains@gmail.com, eaglevalleyretreat.com, 604-729-3120, $899.

MAR 28
White Rock Social Justice Film Society presents "Take Back Your Power: The Real Story Behind Hydro's Increasing Costs." You can make a healthy, affordable BC province in which to live. By donation. 7PM, First United Church, Buena Vista at Centre St., White Rock.

MAR 28-30
Living in the shadow of your family tree? Heal destructive familial patterns. Family Constellation Workshop. www.wisteriaacres.com, 604-807-2255.

MAR 28-30
Introduction to Foot Reflexology commences Certificate Weekend Training Course. Friday Introduction 7:30PM $10; Course $395 + GST. Pacific Institute of Reflexology (604) 875-8818 www.pacificreflexology.com

MAR 29
Want more buzz in your backyard? Free event "Bugs With Benefits 2014 UNIBUG Forum." Refreshments 9AM, Presentations 10AM-12Noon. Douglas College, New Westminster Campus, 700 Royal Ave., Rm. 2201. Keynote speaker Dr. Elizabeth Elle from SFU.

MAR 30
Adventure into Time and Beyond with Rifa Hodgson presents Intuitive Experiential Workshop - Reunite With Your Soulmates, 10:30AM-1:30PM, West Vancouver. rifa@lifebetweenlives.ca 1-888-606-8463. www.lifebetweenlives.ca/Events

APR 3
New! Positive Mysticism – Free Jyoti Meditation Workshop. 7:15PM. Angel Hands Wellness, Upstairs #201-1416 West 8th/ Vancouver. Please pre-register: Linda, 604-985-5840, lindabbee@gmail.com. Drop-ins welcome.

APR 4-6
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APR 5
Natural Wellness Career Fair: Looking for an exciting career in Natural Health? Presented by Health Action Network. Vancouver Public Library, Main Branch, Street Level. West Georgia & Hamilton. 10AM-5PM.

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KITSILANO COMMUNITY ACUPUNCTURE

SLIDING SCALE $20-$40. You pay what you can afford. 2948 W. Broadway, Vancouver. www.kitscommunityacupuncture.ca 604-428-1260

RETREATS

AN OASIS FOR YOUR SPIRITUAL JOURNEY: Krishnamurti Educational Centre of Canada. Beautiful oceanfront setting near Victoria. Info: www.krishnamurti-canada.ca or 250-744-3354.

BEAUTIFUL, QUIET COTTAGES, spectacular view above Kootenay Lake. Great for reading, writing, getting in touch with nature and self or relaxing. cottagesinthewoodsretreat.com

SHAMANIC HEALING

LIFE COACHING FROM A SHAMANIC PERSPECTIVE: Relationships, work, emotional balance, finding meaning and purpose, rediscovering joy. One-on-one/groups – Drum journeys, Book of Life Pipe readings, Mayan Tarot readings, chakra balancing, karma releasing. sonyaweir@uniserve.com 778-227-2939. www.eaglefireshamaniccoaching.com

SPIRITUAL HEALING

SPA FOR THE SOUL: COME TO LEARN new things about yourself, enjoy silence and find peace of mind. Meet others who are integrating spirituality into their lives. Brahma Kumaris Meditation Centre, 604-436-4795 vancouver@ca, brahmakumaris.org

THE PORTAL - A SAFE HOUSE FOR THE SOUL & your Creative Self. Heart Alchemy Sessions & Ceremony, Tarot Art Readings, Meditation & Satsang & Healing Sessions, Angel Channelling, Sacred Cacao Sharing, Mantra Meditation, Reiki, Heart Centred Real Estate & Drama Work. 4755 51st, Ladner, BC. www.facebook.com/heartalchemist

…continued from previous page

Datebook Events

pre-registered. 1-877-846-3948, www.CorePotentials.com See display ad.

MAY 17

Spiritual Experiences Fair: Change Your Consciousness, Change Your Life. 1:30-4PM, UBC, 6138 Student Union Blvd. Free event, everyone welcome. Come share your spiritual experiences & insights. Discussions, activities, music, & more. Presented by Eckankar. 1-844 I AM SOUL.

MAY 17-18

I Can Do It! Mind-Body-Soul Retreat, Queen Elizabeth Theatre, Vancouver. With Carolyn Myss, Bruce Lipton, Wayne Dyer, Doreen Virtue & more. 800-654-5126 or www.hayhouse.com/events See display ad.

JUN 8

Veg Expo: Come explore the truth about GMOs from world-renowned expert Jeffrey M. Smith. A day for the entire family. For more information and tickets, check out vegexpo.ca

ONGOING

Pranic Healing: learn how Prana (life force) can be used to accelerate the healing of your body, mind and life. www.healingwithprana.com, healingwithprana@gmail.com

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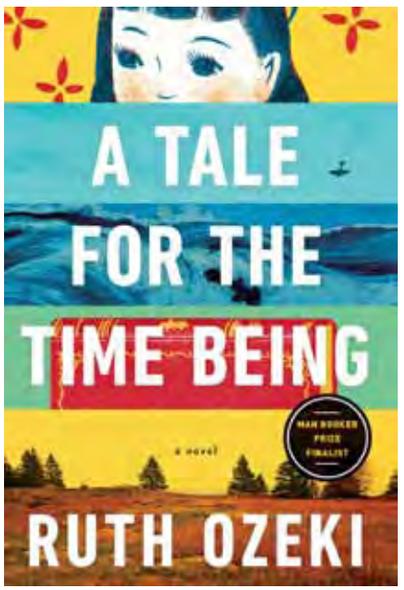
A post-Fukushima masterpiece



"On March 11, 2011, the Tohoku earthquake, tsunami and nuclear meltdown drew a line that divided time," says writer, filmmaker, Zen Buddhist priest and *Common Ground* reader Ruth Ozeki, who divides her time between New York City and Cortes Island.

"In BC, we look west across a big ocean in a post-Fukushima world," she adds. "For much of the year, I live in an area that relies on the sea, shellfish and fishing and we all worry. In so many different ways, we are interconnected, especially on the Pacific Rim and it's easy to forget how inextricably linked we are."

The mega-earthquake and 40-metre-high waves swept 10km inland, killing 20,000 people, displacing another 300,000, moving Japan 2.5 metres closer to North America and causing a nuclear crisis with epic, ongoing, unknown impacts that have terrified the world ever since. The tragic, triple catastrophe also swept away five years of Ozeki's work, a finished novel that she would re-write: *A Tale for the Time Being*, internationally acclaimed as a masterpiece, was short-listed last year for literature's most coveted award, the Man Booker Prize.

"For several years, I had been studying time and being, reading Western philosophers and essays by Dogen Zenji, a 13th century Zen master," she recalls. "My job as a writer is to pay attention to voices and in late 2006 I began hearing a troubled teenager in Tokyo trying to speak through a diary, with plans of committing suicide when it was finished.

"I wrote down, 'Hi! My name is Nao and I'm a time being. Do you know what a time being is? Well, if you give me a moment, I will tell you. A time being is someone who lives in time and that means you and me and every one of us who is, or was, or ever will be.'

"That stuck with me and I followed her life and 'last' task: to tell the story of her 104- year-old great-grandmother Jiko, a famous anarchist-feminist-novelist-turned-Buddhist-nun," Ozeki recalls. Needing a diary 'reader' in the novel, Ruth "auditioned" a handful of characters, "ushering" them into drafts of 50 to 100 pages until "the whole thing would lose energy and I'd realize, 'Okay, that character isn't right' and start again. By the end of 2010, I actually finished a very, very different book including the 'discovery' of Noa's diary in the Vancouver Public Library.

"After the tsunami, it really hit home that what I was submitting for publication was no longer relevant or even appropriate. I also realized that – metaphorically and realistically – this presented a tremendously resonant, multiracial and multicultural image. And one of the things that had begun to fascinate me was the debris – tragic remnants of so many people's lives – that will wash up on our shores, a sad and beautiful way of talking about and clearly illustrating our interconnectedness."

In a suddenly different world, with family and friends at the epicentre, Ozeki was glued to media through terrible days, weeks and months. "Reality intrudes," her husband Oliver remarked, suggesting that she step into the book herself, reluctantly agreeing to play a very fictionalized role himself, along with their cat.

Ozeki says, "I realized that the only way to address or talk about this now present reality was to break the fictional container." Ripping up more than half of the book, she spent months tearing into topics and providing profound, personal insights into cyber-bullying and Silicon Valley, Kamikaze pilots and quantum physics, from ancient and contemporary Japan, to island life in her new home where Noa's diary would now wash ashore with equally mysterious artefacts.

Legions of fans, like myself, are awed by the arc of her remarkable career, through her award winning films, including *Halving the Bones*, to the widely hailed debut novel, *My Year of Meats*, a wildly subversive take on the beef industry, cultural differences, gender roles and sexual exploitation. Her warm and witty saga, *All Over Creation*, followed, in which she focused on agribusiness, environmental activism and community. But none of this celebrated work prepared anyone for the scope of the universally praised *A Tale for the Time Being,* now available in paperback.

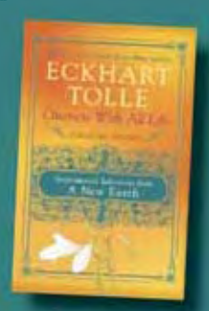
Ruth Ozeki

"We can reflect on how deeply we depend on each other and the infinite number of ways we are connected. Our mutual interdependence is so vast and so deep that, in reality, we can't live without each other. We can close our reflection by opening our hearts to the people of Japan and to resolve to end suffering and to live together... and in peace," notes Ozeki.

She now spends less time in Manhattan, more in Desolation Sound, a universal voice from here, reaching out across cultures, time and space. Take advantage of any opportunity to hear the audio version of the book, narrated by the author, whose story-telling is spell-binding and satisfying, leaving so many of us wanting to hear much more.

Bruce Mason is a Vancouver and Gabriola-Island based five-string banjo player, gardener, freelance writer and author of **Our Clinic**. brucemason@shaw.ca

#1 New York Times bestselling author Eckhart Tolle highlights the most inspiring and beautiful insights of *A New Earth*



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★ *This small town will make you reassess what you think civilization should be like* - The Guardian

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★ *One of the top ten Emerging Ski Towns* - National Geographic

Changing your mind

The ancients pointed to higher awareness using many names – enlightenment, moksha, bodhi, kensho, satori, kevala jnana are but a few.

In our modern world, we live so deeply in a limited mindset and it is the source of so many people not being happy, healthy and living a life of ease. In this limited mindset we are consumed with irritation, worry, aggression, and fear – these are habitual unhelpful patterns of conditioned reactivity.

Stress is the name we use for the condition that envelops all the symptoms of the limited mindset. Stress is energy draining and takes us away from our true inspired selves.

On some level we know that our natural state is one without stress, where we can endure the rapid pace of life without difficulty, where we experience joy and where our mind is clear. But most of us have lost the understanding and appreciation of the true holistic way and we live detached from nature and this greater way of being.

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Spend 5 minutes alone in silence	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Wear a smile inside your mind	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Smile to everyone you meet	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Think of one thing that you feel grateful for today	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
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